



ROCKY MOUNTAIN AREA COORDINATION CENTER

Bureau of Indian Affairs (Southwest, Rocky Mountain and Great Plains Regions)

Bureau of Land Management (Colorado and Wyoming)

National Park Service (Intermountain and Midwest Regions)

Fish and Wildlife Service (Mountain/Prairie Region)

Forest Service (Rocky Mountain Region)

State Agencies in Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas

For Immediate Release

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2015 Fire Potential Outlook Now Available

Denver, CO; April 9, 2015 – The Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center announced availability of the first 2015 fire potential outlook for the Rocky Mountain Area—Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, South Dakota and Wyoming.

“This year we are expecting an average to above-average fire season, or more active fire season compared to last year,” said Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center Fire Meteorologist Tim Mathewson. “A repeat of a 2000, 2002, 2006 and 2012 historic fire season is unlikely at this time; however, the next several weeks are going to be critical in terms of precipitation.”

The driest areas that could experience more fire activity extend from northwest Colorado through Wyoming and South Dakota. Southwest and eastern Colorado benefited from a few snow storms in February and early March, but have experienced below average moisture since then. The Plains have seen little moisture during the last several weeks as well, along with increased wind and low humidity events. Above average temperatures during the last several months has resulted in early depletion of snowpack across the Rocky Mountain Area, with values well below seasonal averages.

April and May are expected to be wetter across the Rocky Mountain Area compared to March. Temperatures through the remainder of the spring are forecast to remain above average, further depleting snowpack earlier than normal. The frequency of wind and low humidity events have remained below 2012 levels, but above 2014 levels; and are expected to continue. If dry conditions persist into April and May, fire potential could increase.

Grass from last year’s growing season is abundant and early snowmelt has already exposed heavier fuels, dead and down woody material ranging from one to eight inches in diameter. Fire risk will remain elevated until green-up, especially east of the divide in the lower foothills, below 8,000 feet in elevation and adjacent plains. These areas will continue to experience windy and dry conditions as storms systems move through the area this spring.

The outlook is available online at: http://gacc.nifc.gov/rmcc/predictive/outlook/Seasonal_Outlook.pdf. Daily, short-term and long-term seasonal outlooks will be released throughout the fire season. The next update will be released in early May.

A fire potential outlook is a decision support tool used to raise awareness, provide an assessment of weather and fuels conditions, and evaluate how conditions could evolve in the coming months. It alerts the public and assists fire managers in making proactive decisions that will improve protection of life, property and natural resources; increase firefighter safety and effectiveness; and reduce firefighting costs.

The outlook is determined by examining several variables such as precipitation, snowpack, wind events, relative humidity levels, temperatures, sea surface temperatures, expected weather patterns, fuel dryness and drought conditions.

Public land and emergency managers across the Rocky Mountain Area have begun preparing for fire season and are encouraging the public to do their part as well. For tips, tools and reminders on preparing for and preventing wildfires visit: <http://www.fireadapted.org> and <http://smokeybear.com/be-smart-outdoors.asp>. During hot, dry and windy periods when fire danger is elevated, please be careful with anything that could start a fire. Do your part, don’t let a wildfire start.

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The Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center (RMACC) is an interagency office consisting of personnel from USDI Bureau of Indian Affairs, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDI National Park Service, USDI Fish & Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service and the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control. The purpose of the Center is to be the focal point for logistical support (i.e., mobilization and demobilization of resources) between the ten interagency Dispatch Centers within the Rocky Mountain Area, and the National Interagency Coordination Center. In addition, the Center provides Predictive Services, Intelligence and Public Information related products for decision support.